

Inspections and Observations

Why Inspect and Observe?

The most important reason to inspect and observe is to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. Other reasons to inspect and observe are to:

- Create and further promote a culture of safety
- Identify and replicate safe work processes, practices and conditions throughout the organization
- Avoid missing things
- Prevent complacency
- Raise safety awareness and hazard recognition
- Eliminate barriers to safe, efficient production
- Meet and exceed regulatory requirements and avoid liability

React to Negative Perceptions

To improve negative perceptions of observations and inspections:

- Create an environment free of reprisal for observations
- Encourage EVERYONE to observe
- Recognize good, safe work practices
- Find and fix the *real* reasons for safety issues
- Follow up to make sure hazards are corrected
- Inform affected people of progress

When you are a **safety advocate**, employees:

- Expect you to be an educator and expert
- Demand you take their suggestions seriously
- Rely on you to escalate their concerns
- Believe that you care about them

Prepare for Inspections and Observations

When you plan to inspect and observe:

- Be an expert about company and regulatory requirements
- Use incident and observation records to identify areas to focus on
- Allot a sufficient amount of time (don't rush)
- Involve the right people (experts, other managers, etc.)
- Use checklists to remind you about safety requirements and things to look for

Best Practices for Inspections and Observations

Good observers should:

- Be hyperaware
- Think ahead
- Trust their instincts
- Be open-minded
- Have conversations
- Be OK with finding nothing wrong
- Correct problems and praise good ideas as soon as possible
- Know the process for notifying supervisors

When you inspect or observe:

- Announce your presence to workers
- Warn workers if you plan to take pictures
- Resolve problems immediately, if you can, and document what you did
- Remove or block hazards if you can't resolve them
- Communicate about hazards

When you want to **provide feedback** to someone you are observing:

- Don't be a distraction
- Make eye contact and ask the person to stop

Safe Behavior

If you observe people using safe behaviors:

- Find out why they are doing what they're doing
- Commend them
- Follow up with their supervisor/manager

Unsafe Behavior

If you observe an unsafe behavior or condition:

- Let the worker know what you observed and explain what's wrong
- Find out why it happened
 - Get to the root of the issue
 - There is often a systemic reason for an unsafe condition
- Provide guidance (worker avoidance or company solution)
- Follow up with the supervisor or area manager

Documenting Findings

When you document your findings:

- Be as detailed as possible
- Assign risk classifications to risks and hazards
- Recommend corrective actions that target underlying causes
- Assign corrective actions with due dates

Remember: It's OK to find nothing wrong!

After an Inspection and Observation

To follow up, you should:

- Schedule and monitor corrective actions
- Send formal memos or reports to management
- Provide guidance about budgeting, scheduling and implementing
- Verify and document that corrective actions are in place
- Follow up with employees involved in the process

Continue to inspect and observe!